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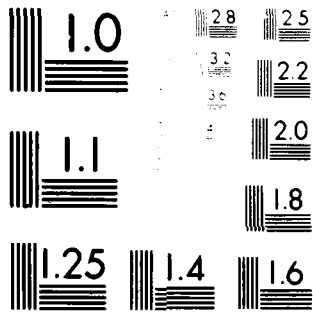
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FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION



TWO LANDINGS

by

Lukasz Stanislawski



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TWO LANDINGS

Łukasz Stanisławski



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It was hot. It was burning hot. Leszek entered the room. He had an animated expression on his face hard to describe.

"Tomorrow they're going to be landing and taking off on the freeway," he said as he entered. "I just talked to the regimental commander, if the weather is good for flying tomorrow, it's for sure. Shall we go?"

"But is the weather going to be good for flying?" I asked. "It looks like there's going to be a storm."

Leszek Wróblewski, a news photographer for the Military Photographic Agency, looked through the window at the milk-white, cloudless sky. "There'll be good weather!"

The "Central" railway depot, the track in front of the ticket office, and then we're already moving along quickly in the direction of Szczecin. Along the way, the temperature drops. When we pass through Poznan, it was already pouring down rain.

A couple of hours later, time for a train change. We're traveling on a local train. We take the long walk from the depot to the hotel in streams of rain. Midnight arrives. Is the weather going to be good for flying? Leszek is strangely quiet. He assures me the weather is going to be good.

A beautiful dawn awakens us.

We telephone the Second Regiment of the Fighter Aircraft Air Arm, the "Kraków," but the day had begun a long time ago at the Regiment, and nobody from the command is in the garrison, everybody

has gone out to fly. The Officer of the Day promises to send a car. We wait.

Pilots live in this small town, carrying out the duties of their profession, carrying out the duty of protecting and arming the Polish skies. They live here, sunk in the civilian life of the town. But still, they live foremost for the life of flying and the Air Force. The essence of their lives is dedicated to flying. The Second PLM [Regimental Fighter Aircraft Air Arm], the "Kraków," has splendid traditions, but will it be a good Regiment today? Will the pilots be good today? These are rhetorical questions: it is in this very Regiment that the premier pilots among all pilots of the Air Forces have initiated landing and taking off on highways.

Was this just my imagination? Was this some kind of trick? No, it is an urgent necessity. In case of a possible armed conflict, it could happen that the enemy would first bomb the airfield. Of course, as soon as the alarm was sounded, the airplanes would take off into the sky. But when they come back to land, what would happen if the airfield had ceased to exist? It's necessary to devote more training to landing on the highways and freeways along certain designated sections. And for this it's necessary to possess the highest arts of a pilot's ability. For a supersonic Mig, this kind of landing is not at all a simple affair.

"Look," Leszek broke into my thoughts.

Above appeared two sleek, silvery aircraft. These are Iskry. They moved across the cloudless, sun-drenched sky in an arc. It is for certain that they are making a weather reconnaissance flight. Today the weather is favorable for flying. We are lucky.

At the same time, a military vehicle drives up. A major in an Air Force jacket gets out, he says he is the political officer, and he will take us to the highway.

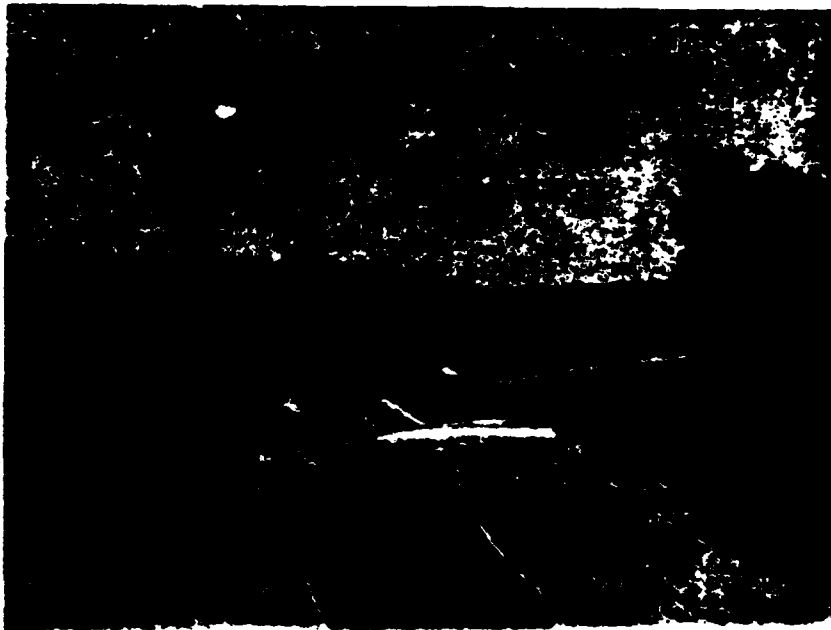


Two landings. Both successfully carried out. Captain Jerzy Grzegorek congratulates Lieutenant Jacek Adamczyk on the successful carrying out of his mission after landing on the highway for the first time.



Flight control point located near the freeway.

We leave the city behind, the roadway is not very wide, with a cobblestoned surface, and leading through the forest. Around a turn, the major points out a place where a drama was played out that had a lucky ending, the drama of a pilot. It happened recently, and the major was an eye witness of this lucky event. A Mig 21 with a



A flight has just landed, the aircraft are being turned around, and they will take off immediately.

red star came down over the roadway. He dropped down and flew very slowly along the line of the highway. He turned around and repeated the maneuver, but this time the pilot switched on his flying lights. The car drivers who were traveling along this section of the highway understood the Soviet pilot's intentions, and they drove off to the side and even off into the forest. The Mig-21 then came in low for the third time and landed. He stopped just before this bend in the road. A young Soviet pilot got out of the aircraft, a lieutenant. Everybody got out of their cars and ran up to him and congratulated him. This was no mean feat. In order to land at supersonic speeds on such a narrow section of highway running through a high forest area, it was necessary for the pilot to be very good. Even a master in the pilot arts.

The Soviet officer told them then that his instruments had failed, and that he had lost ground contact and had lost his orientation in the air. For a long time, for a very long time, he had searched for some kind of airfield. Then, he ran out of fuel. He could have used his ejection seat, but he didn't want to lose his aircraft, so he tried to land on the roadway, and he succeeded.

The Soviet pilot was very lucky, and one-half hour after his landing, a military jeep drove up and an officer got out, a Soviet Army colonel. He ran up to the lieutenant, shook his hand warmly, and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Fine fellow, fine fellow," the colonel repeated. "Fine fellow."

Three-quarters of an hour passed. A huge helicopter with a red star flew down low over the forest, over the roadway; airmen holding huge metal lines came down rope ladders. They hooked the metal lines to the Mig-21 and the huge "dragonfly" lifted the supersonic fighter up and disappeared with it into the sky. It was a sight, as the major told of it, that was not an everyday one.

We turn onto the freeway off the road. It is empty. A guard is directing approaching traffic onto a bypass road. Whenever pilots carry out landing exercises on the freeway, several kilometers of the freeway have to be blocked off. For this, a bypass road has to be provided. The guard checks our documents and points us to the entrance to the empty two-lane freeway. We drive for perhaps one-half kilometer. Another soldier directs our automobile into the forest. It's not possible to drive any further, and we have to continue on foot.

The highway here is empty, and as straight as long school benches. There is a thin strip of grass along the median. An automobile is parked along the edge of the forest; the station for today's take-off controller, Major Antony Borys, has been set up in it.

I have a good view out of the cabin, which has glazed windows: looking to the left, I can see along the highway running to the east. And it is from this direction that the aircraft will fly over. It's a formation of four, a flight. They are moving along as if in a parade file. Suddenly, they flash into sight: these are Mig-21's, aircraft that fly faster than sound. And right here in front of us,

the first aircraft breaks away from the formation of four. He turns around in a broad arc.

"That's Major Zbigniew Chmurzyński," I hear.

The take-off controller has contact with flight control, and as he follows the flight control, he communicates all his commands to them. In the instant after Major Chmurzyński's maneuver, he spots a second Mig.

"Behind the rudder of that second one," he tells us, "is Major Władysław Gadowski."

A third Mig comes along in the tracks of the second one. And then a fourth one. The formation of Mig's sets off to the east in climbing flight. But several seconds later, the first aircraft appears again.

"Chmurzyński," the take-off controller utters tersely.

From a small speck, the aircraft becomes a large dot. He approaches us rapidly and drops down just as fast. From our station, we can see only how he rushes along close to the ground along the center of the highway. Then, he flashes right in front of our station. The pilot raises his hand, and Major Borys answers him with the same greeting.

The Mig turns around and moves from the right-hand to the left-hand lane of the highway. Mechanics run up to it, test the wheels, hook up a hose to the tires from a special vehicle, and top them off with air, inspecting the exterior of the fuselage to see that everything is in order.

As Chmurzyński sits in front of our station, Gadowski lands, and after him another pilot. Just then, Major Chmurzyński is getting ready for take-off again. You can tell this from the increased engine revolutions. There's a roar and rumbling as the aircraft is

being held by its set brakes, and the air around it vibrates. The pilot releases his brakes and increases his engine revolutions. The Mig rushes faster and faster down the highway, and then its front begins to lift, and then its undercarriage wheels tear themselves away from the earth. It climbs steeply, very steeply up into the air. It becomes a dot, and then only a little speck. And then the glow of his afterburner disappears, after which comes the usual roar heard on the ground that signals that the pilot has broken through the sound barrier.

As Gadowski prepares for take-off in front of our station, the third pilot, Major Jerzy Grzegorek, taxis down the highway. They turn him around on the highway, and the mechanics inspect the aircraft. At the same time, the fourth pilot, Major Zbigniew Śluz, comes in for his landing.

Gadowski is already in the air. The aircraft, trailing a long streak, disappears into the cloudless sky. You can still hear the roar of his engine. Grzegorek takes off after Gadowski. The "Pilot of the Year" for 1979 was Gadowski; he is a pilot who has distinguished himself everywhere in military rocket gunnery. The bombs that he lets loose from his Mig always strike their targets.

Deciding to select a "pilot of the year" was a valuable project. In the second PLM [Regimental Fighter Aircraft Air Arm], the "Kraków," the notion of instituting a competition for the title of "Socialist Service Flight" was first initiated and then somewhat later the competition for the title of "Best Regimental Pilot." The "best pilot" in 1976 was Major Ryszard Krzeszewski. The year afterward, it was Captain Szymon Krupa. In 1978, it was Major Romuald Podgórski, and then Grzegorek.

For the present year, five pilots in the Regiment had equally good flying records. The commission in charge of judging the competition proposed that the best pilot be chosen by means of a direct majority vote among the flying cadre. In a secret ballot, the pilots

chose one of the youngest pilots, Captain Jerzy Bachta. This was a decent gesture. It testifies to the confidence of one's colleagues, their good favor, and kindness. As a result, the Captain will be leaving the regiment and the garrison. He will be directed, as a result of his distinction, to a special group of experimental pilots, where the best of the best fly. They carry out air tests in the latest equipment. But it's not due to the fact that Bachta is leaving the regiment that he became "Pilot of the Year." His outstanding achievements in his duty and service decided this, especially his achievements during the Warsaw Pact exercises, "Braterstwo Broni-80" [Brotherhood of Arms-80]. The Soviet pilots judged Bachta very highly, saying that it was difficult to find his equal or better in the air.

Once again the formation flew over the freeway. Once again they are flying wingtip-to-wingtip, as if on air parade. It is Major Chmurzyński who breaks off first. Gadowski follows after him, then Grzegorek, and then Śluz.

Chmurzyński lands first. The aircraft settles down with great speed, but deftly. The Mi- touches its wheels in the very center of the strip of the highway.

The first flight formation is landing for the second time. They turn them around on the highway, and take them off again. After their second take-off off the "road," the landing will take place on the home airfield, on a normal broad strip. On the highway, there will be today only two landings and two take-offs for each pilot.

The first flight has carried out its assignment. It's break time. Major Ryszard Kloc, the political officer, comes into the take-off controller's shed.

We know each other from our "academy" days. At one time, Ryszard was known to "all" Poland, because in the competition "The

," he was victorious and received a small Fiat as a prize. time, he was a lieutenant, and all we soldiers had our crossed for him. It's obvious that it worked.

szard invites us to come with him, walking along the highway place where the flight control station is located. Lieutenant Zbigniew Biedrzycki, a Meritorious Military Pilot of the PRL ces of the Polish Republic], is directing today's flights.

walk for perhaps a kilometer. Once again there is rumbling, k has ended. A line formation flies above the highway, fly- to wing. It's the same maneuver as in the first flight. er breaks off first, this is Major Wenancjush Rolka.

this flight, the one that's coming just now," Ryszard says, o some of the most promising pilots."

or Rolka, a strong and daring pilot, flies almost with brava- he's a good pilot. Captain Jerzy Grzesczcuk became a master cs and target practice for the military air forces this year. nt Colonel Jerzy Cebrzyński is the son of a pilot who fought ar in England.

zard tells the story of the Polish pilot, Lieutenant Arsen ki. In 1939, in September, he defended the Polish sky over and then later fought in several air wars. Later, he fought e. He was a flight commander. Then one day, a couple of k off. They were attacked by a large group of German fight- lieutenant Cebrzyński's aircraft was hit with missiles. The pilot bailed out with his parachute. As soon as the Germans they machine-gunned him. He died in the air. He was a with three war crosses and two French decorations. Lieutenant brzyński is buried in Northwood in Great Britain.

come to the flight control station. Divisional General Krepski, the commander of the military air forces, is seated

a camp chair.

"They are flying excellently," he says. "They are flying with timing and great precision."

The second flight has taken off from the highway. They turn around far away in the clouds and land again. The aircraft, one after the other, are turned around on the concrete, and they blast away into the sky. The second flight has completed its assignment.

Then, the third flight enters the activity. Major Bolesław Mączak, an experienced pilot, is leading this flight. They descend onto the highway rapidly and smoothly. And then after the first aircraft, comes a second. In it is a pilot who is landing a Mig for the first time on a highway, Captain Kazimierz Lewenko. Behind him, there is another pilot who is landing for the first time, Lieutenant Jacek Adamczyk. How will these first landings turn out?

To land a supersonic aircraft on a highway is uniquely difficult. They land with their noses turned upward, with their undercarriage wheels touching the concrete first. This is a moment when the pilot sees only his instruments and the sky. And he's going at speeds greater than 300 km/hr. He needs here a great deal of intuition and great precision, because the least disturbance can cause a tragic ending. And then just in time, the aircraft's nose falls onto its nose wheel.

Both Lewenka's and Adamczyk's aircraft descend smoothly onto the highway, squeezed in between the forest walls coming down to the edge of the highway. General Krepski is satisfied.

"I congratulate you all," he says. And he thanks the pilots warmly.

The General invites us to the helicopter. Slowly, the helicopter blades begin to turn. We lift up above the forest, and we observe

how the third flight is taking off from the highway.

Several minutes of flight go by. The helicopter sets down on the airfield of the second PLM. The General tells us to wait, because in a short while the day's flights will be ending and they will be discussed.

General Krepski gets into a Lim. He starts it up, taxis it out, and takes off. The 61-year-old pilot, a General and the Commander of the Military Air Forces, rises steeply up into the sky. The Lim will soon be on its course to Poznan.

We wait on the terrace of the "Pilot's Club." First, the Mig's land. The pilots get out of their cockpits, fatigued, exhausted, but with a certain kind of uncommon gleam in their eyes. They haven't shaken off the tension yet. Their thoughts are still up above, in the air.

The first drops of rain begin to fall out of the sky, washing the sweat off the pilots' smiling faces. There is the hubbub of talk and laughter at the airfield. Bit by bit, the tension falls away.

A General from the Military Air Forces Command leads the discussion of the flights. He praises the pilots, and thanks them for their excellent performance. Later comes the assignment of duties for the flights the next day. And then, an automobile is waiting once again, which takes us to the garrison Officer's Club. The rain beats down on the roof, and runs down the windows. Storm clouds, driven by a stronger and stronger wind, have appeared in the sky, which was clear not long ago.

"There'll be a storm," Leszek says.

As we waited at the railway depot, it was thundering, and there was lightning. After several hours, as we were already on our way

in the train, moving out of the western border region toward the capital, it cleared up, and then later the deep navy-blue sky, clothed in stars, announced good weather. Leszek Wróblewski, a photo journalist for the WAF [Military Photographic Agency], who had already spent several years photographing Air Force activity, with a hint of experience in his voice, said:

"Tomorrow they'll have good weather. They'll have good flying."





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